

Development Research Forum of Cambodia

*'Where we challenge, inspire and support
each other to do better'*

First phase review: May 2010

*Jenny Pearson
Independent Consultant
15th June 2010*

Contents

Acronyms:	ii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Development Research Forum of Cambodia	1
1.2 Purpose of the review	1
1.3 Review process.....	1
2. Findings	2
2.1 Achievement against objectives	2
2.2 Components.....	3
2.3 Contribution	5
2.4 Priorities	5
2.5 Operating environment	6
2.6 Governance and Operations	7
2.7 Sustainability.....	8
3. Other issues that emerged from the discussions	8
3.1 In need of an identity!.....	9
3.2 The Cambodian – expatriate balance	9
3.3 Engagement with policy.....	9
4. Moving forward	10
4.1 Transition	10
4.2 Agreed steps	10
Appendix 1: Review Terms of Reference	11
Appendix 2: List of Interviews.....	14
Appendix 3: Guide Questions for Interviews	15
Appendix 4: Feedback Workshop	16

Acronyms:

CBNRM LI	Community Based Natural Resource Management Learning Institute
CC	Co-coordinators (i.e. CBNRM LI and CDRI)
CCC ADI	Cooperation Committee of Cambodia Analysing Development Issues project
CDRI	Cambodian Development Research Institute
CEA	Cambodian Economic Association
DRF	Development Research Forum (of Cambodia)
IDRC	International Development Research Institute
RUPP	Royal University of Phnom Penh
SC	Steering Committee
SIG	Special Interest Groups
SNEC	Supreme National Economic Council
TOR	Terms of Reference
WG	Working Groups

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Development Research Forum of Cambodia

The project known as the Development Research Forum (DRF) of Cambodia was established at the suggestion of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) following a successful All-Partner's Forum in September 2007. The proposal for the project was developed and submitted jointly by the Cambodian Development Research Institute (CDRI) and the Community Based Natural Resource Management Learning Institute (CBNRM LI). The proposal noted that the DRF *'could become an engine of thinking about development research priorities at both national and local level, and would involve government, the private sector, civil society and research organisations'*. There were six specific objectives, which are given in detail below. CDRI and CBNRM LI were subsequently designated Co-coordinators (CC) of the project and each hold the budget for different areas of DRF activities. The DRF is managed overall by a Steering Committee (SC) which includes the CC and representatives of three other agencies: the Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC), the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) and the Cooperation Committee of Cambodia's Analysing Development Issues project (CCC ADI).

Since the project was initiated in March 2008 there have been two successful annual symposia that provided opportunities for individuals, organisations and institutions to share their research on development issues. The other major activities have been to set up an 'Accelerated ICT Platform', which is now up and running and based at CBNRM LI, and to commission a Scoping Study on research in universities. Other planned activities have either been slow in starting, or are not yet underway, for reasons that will be discussed below.

1.2 Purpose of the review

As the project is now at the start of the third and final year of the current funding phase thought needs to be given to how to go forward after the end of this period. This review was commissioned to enable the SC and administrators to assess how the project has done so far, the factors supporting or hindering achievement of the objectives and the priorities for the transition to a second phase of operations. The review has been conducted as a facilitated self-assessment and decision-making process rather than in the style of an evaluation by an external expert. Details of the tasks to be completed and required outputs are given in the Terms of Reference (TOR) at Appendix 1.

1.3 Review process

The key activities in the review process have been:

- Review of all relevant documentation
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- A workshop with the Cambodia based members of the SC

Interviews were conducted in person with 10 current and former members of the SC and the two administrators based in Cambodia, and by Skype with the two IDRC members based in Singapore. The full list of interviewees is given at Appendix 2. The subjects and guide questions for the interviews were developed from the suggestions given in the TOR. The full list of guide questions is given at Appendix 3.

Following completion of the report a presentation has been made to IDRC personnel in Singapore, and there will be a further workshop for the SC to deliberate and make decisions on key issues for going forward.

2. Findings

2.1 Achievement against objectives

Achievement against objectives was the first subject explored in interviews. Depending on their level of involvement and specific interests some people responded with general answers, while others commented in detail on each of the objectives.

Objective 1: Promote quality in research on key development themes

There were mixed views about this objective, largely because the quality of research is recognised as a large and complex goal. No one talked about quality in relation to specific development themes, only to the challenges of promoting and achieving any degree of reliable quality in research generally. It was acknowledged that improving quality is inherent in what each institute is already doing, quite apart from anything they undertake as a joint initiative in the DRF. The key points made were that:

- While the symposia contribute to quality the DRF does not yet have anything systematic to address quality issues and there is a need to work on some basic standards
- Contributing to quality is hard, it may be outside the scope of the DRF
- A strong achievement is the valuing of quality in research within the broad stakeholder network

Objective 2: Provide a new space for collaborative thinking and leadership amongst diverse development research actors

This objective attracted few specific comments:

- The symposia contribute something to this objective, and in this context the network and space have been created, but are not yet leading to collaboration so there is little overall achievement
- It's a challenge to provide a space for collaborative thinking in the current Cambodian environment

Objective 3: Provide a platform for collaborative thinking on intersections between development research and policy implementation

Within a general acceptance that it is unrealistic to expect too much too quickly this objective prompted some interesting debate about the links between research and policy, which are also dealt with at 3.3 below.

- Some feel that, despite SNEC involvement, senior policy makers have not yet engaged at the symposia. It is hard to encourage them and this needs work and attention
- Others feel that progress is being made in small ways and this is 'in the works'

Objective 4: Communicate and disseminate research on development issues to government, international and national organizations and the media

Some view this as the most important objective, not least to create the demand side for research and to engage the universities. The general feeling is that there has been a degree of success on this objective, mostly through the symposia.

Objective 5: Promote contacts among the Development Research Forum affiliated members by disseminating information on research in progress

Some believe that this is the most important objective if the fledgling research culture is to grow and thrive. It was noted that the definition of 'affiliated members' needs to be clarified. Most felt that due to the symposia and ICT Platform the objective had been partly achieved - 'to some extent', 'satisfactory to good' and 'getting better'. However, one respondent noted that networking is an issue with cultural complexities, as discussed at 3.2 below.

Objective 6: Encourage graduate student participation in seminars and presentations of research proposals and fieldwork results

There were very mixed views on this objective in that some felt that in the context of engagement in, and contributions to, the symposia achievement has been 'excellent'. On the other hand it prompted comments such as 'colossal failure', 'needs intensive work' and 'uneven so far', because some components have not yet been implemented.

Achievements against objectives: summary

Overall the feeling is that there have been some good achievements, in part exceeding expectations, even though some components have yet to be implemented. The review process has generated some observations about the objectives themselves. With the benefit of hindsight it is now clear that the objectives are too ambitious and challenging to be achieved in one project phase. It might have been better if some of them had been framed as long-term goals for the DRF, supported by more specific mid-term objectives that could be achieved within three years. It is also clear that mechanisms for measurement and monitoring need to be established before levels of achievement can accurately be known and understood. It is also becoming clear that the DRF cannot achieve all these objectives alone, it is going to need the active engagement of others for success to be assured, which is an argument for reviewing the objectives to ensure that they reflect results that are within the DRF's control.

The final point of reflection is an important one. The project structure is complex, with 2 agencies taking the lead on different aspects of implementation under the guidance of an SC that involves 3 further agencies. The design and proposal were done in a hurry and there was, at that time, insufficient anticipation of the time needed to establish the partnerships, relationships and mechanisms needed to make the DRF work. This is a common failing in project design, which frequently leads to delayed implementation of activities in the first phase. Everyone involved has been on a sharp learning curve about what is needed for this project to operate successfully, and with the exception of the two part-time administrators everyone is doing this on top of their own institutional duties. In these circumstances it is a credit to all involved that so much has been achieved.

2.2 Components

The project proposal specified three key components to achieve the objectives, namely A. *Research Forum*, B. *Accelerated ICT Platform*, and C. *Research Capacity Support for Universities and a New Generation of Researchers*, each of which is divided into elements. Some of the elements have been implemented with great success, and others have yet to get started.

A. Research Forum

The **Annual Symposia** was described as the 'flagship' of the DRF and acknowledged by all to be a huge success. Yet several people made supplementary comments that can be summed up in the phrase '... and so what?' The recognition is that, despite its success, the symposium will not be sustainable or continue to contribute to achievement of objectives unless attention is given to some key issues in the future, namely to find ways to:

- Engage more with policy makers
- Maximise the energy and networking that the symposia create. The suggestion is to link the symposia to intermediary events, especially at provincial level and the work of Special Interest Groups (SIG)
- Influence the quality of research
- Ensure that it does not become formulaic and stale

The planning process for this year's symposium is currently underway and hopefully those responsible can take these points into consideration.

Special Interest Groups: only two initiatives have happened thus far. One is the Economic Research Interest Group, coordinated by Cambodia Economic Association (CEA) and the second is the Environmental Research Interest Group, coordinated by Department of Environmental Science of RUPP. The SIG were cited by several respondents as being an important aspect of developing a research culture and achieving overall objectives. However it was also acknowledged that this type of initiative needs leadership, which is not yet emerging, except in the two groups mentioned above. There were no suggestions about how the necessary leadership might be encouraged.

Collaborative Grants: this is one of the components that have been slow in getting started due to the workload created by other activities. The first four grants have now been awarded, through an open application and assessment process. This element is seen as being very important to encourage and support young researchers and to engage the universities and for this reason some people think Collaborative Grants should be part of component C. There are also some doubts about whether or not the current structure has sufficient capacity to manage the grants process once it is fully established and grants are being made regularly.

Research Fellowships: to date there has been little take up of this element; applications and awards remain in single figures. Some disappointment was expressed that regional opportunities are not being explored and taken up given that this support is available. The reasons for low take up are not clear, though both lack of publicity and the availability of other sources of sponsorship were mentioned as possibilities.

Translation and Editing: the only instances of translation cited in reports are at CDRI, who already have a policy to translate their reports, so it is unclear if this can be attributed to the DRF.

B. Accelerated ICT Platform

This is agreed by all to be another of the DRF's successes that is contributing to achievement of the objectives. The development of the ICT Platform has been undertaken by CBNRM LI, with the support of technical consultants, and was described as being a very good example of technical cooperation. There is anecdotal evidence of increased take up among young Cambodian researchers alongside an acknowledgement that the culture of discussion rooms and such like is not yet well known or understood in Cambodia. It will take time and effort to develop the sustained and dynamic interactive usage that builds a community. It is agreed that one of the next steps should be to upload research papers, especially those presented at the symposia, in both English and Khmer. Even among the SC not everyone really understands the full potential of the platform which is an indicator that it needs more active explanation and promotion. It would also be helpful to develop a way of measuring its use and the benefits perceived by users in order understand how best to continue its development.

C. Research Capacity Support for Universities and a New Generation of Researchers

The **Scoping Study on Challenges and Opportunities for Research Capacity Development** has been delayed for a variety of reasons but is now almost completed. The study is considered an important achievement that will provide the platform for substantive discussion about ways to engage the universities in research. Given that the World Bank are currently exploring the same issues it may prove that this report is very timely and could be a vehicle for attracting funding support for some DRF activities. The SC already has an outline plan of follow up activities.

Little has happened so far to implement the final two elements **Support for Research Seminars** and **Internships and Mentoring**. The former is unlikely to become active until some SIG are established and meeting regularly. Most feel that internships and mentoring are extremely important for

supporting the development of young researchers, but as yet no one has been able to give time to working out how to make them happen. One of the problems is a lack of experienced researchers with the time to support others. A suggestion was made that mentoring should be linked to Collaborative Grants but as yet no one has proposed how to put that idea into action.

Components: summary

There has been high achievement on some of the components, most notably the symposia and the establishment of the ICT Platform, and also now the completion of the Scoping Study. For other elements the achievement has been either patchy or non-existent. Again with the benefit of hindsight this was an ambitious set of activities for a first phase that needed to have all the partnerships and mechanisms of implementation established before activities could get started. It probably would have been more realistic to have less elements and clear sequencing for the first phase activities. It should also be noted that to implement all of these elements would almost certainly create more work than the current limited staffing structure could support.

Despite the uneven implementation everyone thought the components and elements were the right ones to support achievement of the objectives, there were no suggestions for removal or additions.

2.3 Contribution

All the respondents felt that the DRF has already been able to make a contribution to development research in Cambodia. The main points cited were:

- Development research is coming to be recognised as a legitimate aim in and of itself
- Quality is now *'on the agenda'*
- It has brought the development research community together in partnership and is developing the network to take it forward
- Growing a research culture through diverse discussion, debate and critical analysis
- Creating a place of communication for research results and mapping what research has been done
- Building a base of hope for young researchers
- It has generated interest and awareness in many agencies, creating linkages and interactions at ministry and institutional level, getting RGC (and NGOs) to understand the contribution that research can make as a response to issues and challenges
- There is also more interest among development practitioners, community representatives, academic researchers, government researchers and policy makers

In summary, research is gaining a higher profile in the development arena in Cambodia, which helps with the generation of knowledge and ideas across disciplines.

The hopes for the contribution that DRF can make in the long-term include continuation of all of the above points, plus some more:

- A more dynamic community, building the capacity of new generations of researchers, especially in the universities, which can decide its own agenda for going forward
- More collaborative research and more effective dissemination
- More linkages to regional and international networks
- Research becomes Cambodian led and accessible to all, especially government officials at implementation level
- Developing a professional community that will influence policy and lead to a better society
- That it will be where we challenge, inspire and support each other to do better

2.4 Priorities

There were two key messages in the discussions about programmatic priorities. The first was to continue and further develop both the **annual symposia** and the **ICT Platform**. The second was to make better linkages between the components and elements in order to enhance their impact.

In terms of specific issues **dissemination of research** is thought to be of particular importance. Dissemination can be supported by going beyond what is already happening and making linkages with other activities such as a programme of **SIG** events and provincial level activities, and publicity about the ICT Platform. The next area of high priority is to engage **young researchers and the universities**. Extending the **Collaborative Grants** and enhancing the ICT Platform capabilities will be important in this respect as will follow up on the **Scoping Study** to agree a strategy with the universities about how to go forward together. Other important priorities mentioned were to find ways to integrate into more **regional and global networks** and to build interest and **ownership of research agenda** among the larger stakeholder group.

The biggest institutional priority is agreed by all as the pressing need to resolve governance issues, which is discussed in more detail at 2.6 below. It is also recognised that it is important to expand membership of the SC, by including more universities and other agencies, in order to avoid becoming an *'insiders' club*. The final institutional priority is funding diversification, though it is acknowledged that fundraising takes time and expertise and the SC has to decide what will be the most effective way to manage this need.

2.5 Operating environment

An important part of the review process is to look not only at what is happening within the DRF and its immediate network, but also to the environment within which it is operating.

Opportunities

All respondents were enthusiastic about a number of opportunities that the current external environment offers. The ideas raised covered a range of issues, as follows:

- To link to regional and global networks in order to: access additional and different resources; make a Cambodian contribution externally and in doing so build the confidence and capacity of Cambodian researchers; and last, but not least, to know what is going on in the world and avoid isolation in difficult times
- There is enthusiasm and increasing interest within the development and aid community to localise development research and consulting
- There is interest from the universities to have more interaction, which would facilitate implementation of components
- Nationally there is a lot of scope for expression on safe issues
- To become a central networked resource for all that's already out there but scattered
- To exert brokerage across boundaries so researchers can ply their trade which in turn will create space for public policy influence
- SNEC backing allows opportunities for networking and different players having a credible voice within RGC
- To learn from research councils in the region about how they developed and are now making their contribution

Threats

In terms of threats there was also a mixed range of views, from several people saying that they did not see any threats, to those who expressed some substantive concerns. Several commented on the lack of receptiveness to research and the need for the DRF to maintain independence.

- Receptiveness and understanding of research is very minimal, as yet there is no acknowledgement of critical importance of evidence based policy making and no confidence it can happen. In this context policy makers don't want to hear bad news or to have sensitive issues like governance and equity explored in depth. Some felt it will be necessary to stay away from overtly political or contentious issues, and there was one comment that the RGC doesn't want independent, empowered thinkers

- The DRF needs to maintain political independence, in the sense of not becoming something that big entities want to fight over or becoming so high profile that the RGC takes over. (In this context some people think SNEC involvement is very helpful, others think it is a risk in that if SNEC is seen to take too much of a lead it will create a perception that the DRF is an RGC entity.)
- The challenge of human resources: the good people get too busy and it's hard to hold on to them, which affects continuity
- General threats that affect everyone, for example the situation in Thailand and at the border
- Funding issues (see sustainability below)

2.6 Governance and Operations

The TOR highlighted the need for the review process to give consideration to the effectiveness of the current governance structure and operational arrangements of the DRF. It was clear from the start of the process that this is an issue which everyone agrees is in need of attention. But as with all other subjects under consideration there were conflicting views about several aspects of the current set up. The differences can be attributed in part to the different roles held by the members of the SC, from donors, through those tasked with the responsibility of implementing activities and managing the budget, to those who do not have specific roles and responsibilities beyond representing their agencies. It is therefore entirely understandable that there are a range of opinions.

The first important point is to reiterate the comments made above in relation to the achievement of objectives. This is a complex structure bringing together several agencies, with no single person tasked with either a leadership, management or coordination role. It would seem that everyone underestimated what would be needed, within this structure, to set up the partnerships and working arrangements necessary to get the DRF functioning. This situation has been complicated by the lack of continuity created by changes of key personnel in the CC and the fact that each member agency has at least two people nominated to the SC, so that the group composition often varies from one meeting to the next.

Current strengths and weaknesses

The substantial goodwill, enthusiasm and commitment of everyone involved are highly evident throughout the group interviewed for this review. It is this positive energy that has enabled the DRF to achieve a great deal in its first two years. There have been some significant challenges to overcome, but everyone is taking a very constructive approach to learning from mistakes in order to do better next time. The SC is often able to engage in some high level debate about development research issues.

Despite the strengths and achievements there is collective acknowledgement that the current arrangements are not conducive to effectiveness or long term sustainability and therefore need to change. The most pressing challenges are:

- There is no real clarity about the different roles and responsibilities of the SC, CC and the Working Groups (WG) set up to organise the symposia. There are some written guidelines about the role of the SC, but in interviews hardly anyone seem aware of their existence and no one was able to produce a copy of the latest version
- The lack of a designated Chairperson to take a leadership role has resulted in a vacuum on some representation, decision making and communication needs
- The SC is not operating well on decision making and supervision of operational issues. Many think the SC is too involved in operational detail that should be left to the administrators within the CC, but the administrators are unclear about the level of decision they are empowered to make

- There are no clear guidelines for communication or consultation between meetings and busy people often don't respond to email requests for decisions
- Because of the way that operations are organised across the two agencies, no one appears to be holding full DRF institutional documentation. There is no central data base about activities or budget expenditure
- The final point of concern raised by some is that the only accountability within the structure is the CC accountability to IDRC for the budget and that for ownership to develop there should be greater accountability to the SC

These challenges have led, on occasions, to difficulties and frustrations, especially for the administrators and WG. It would seem that some things are slipping through the cracks while others get stalled awaiting decisions. Additionally the two part-time administrators find that the DRF demands on their time are very uneven, making it difficult for them to maintain an appropriate balance with their responsibilities on other projects. At times there are only small tasks to manage such as circulating information and preparing for meetings, but preparation for the symposia, for example, calls for virtually full time commitment for weeks in advance.

Ideas for improvement

The SC had already decided that it needs to have a Chairperson to represent the group externally, and to be a decision maker between SC meetings as required. This is linked to the issues of Cambodian ownership discussed below, and thus a related suggestion was the possibility of the position of Chair attracting an honorarium.

Everyone also acknowledges that the workload is going to increase as the DRF becomes more established and all the components and elements become fully operational. In particular there is concern that administration of the Collaborative Grants could become time consuming. There is also recognition that future fundraising is going to need time from senior members of the SC able to negotiate with donors on behalf of the DRF. These needs have prompted several people to suggest that the best way forward is to create a standing secretariat with at least one full time staff person, based in one institution. This would not preclude other members having budget allocation for activities, but would centralise the coordination of all management, administration and logistic arrangements.

2.7 Sustainability

There is total agreement among the group that the DRF is not yet sustainable programmatically, financially or institutionally. The issues that need to be addressed if the DRF is to survive are covered in this report, and it is understood that failure to resolve them satisfactorily could result in an early demise of the initiative.

With regard to funding IDRC are hopeful of being able to make a commitment for a further phase, but everyone understands that it is not wise to depend on one donor and efforts should be made to broaden the funding base sooner rather than later. There is some confidence that other funding opportunities exist, for example the World Bank interest in supporting the development of research capacity in the universities, as mentioned above.

3. Other issues that emerged from the discussions

During the course of the interviews some issues began to emerge beyond the responses that related directly to the subjects raised.

3.1 In need of an identity!

Currently the DRF is a project that supports an informal (i.e. unregistered) association of 5 agencies within a network that includes several more. While this arrangement has been workable for the start-up phase it is not suitable for the long term. The DRF needs to decide if it wants to remain a project, or become an association or an organisation/institution.

Having a vision of what DRF wants to become in the long-term is critical for a number of reasons, most notably to make decisions about the development of the governance structure and support mechanisms, to attract new membership, to have a clear public profile, and to secure long-term funding. More than one person has talked of the research council example of other countries as the ideal to aim for. Adopting that idea or any other does not create an imperative for immediate establishment of the new entity. It would however create the long term goal to guide key steps of institutional development in the next and subsequent phases.

3.2 The Cambodian – expatriate balance

An issue raised by some expatriates is that expatriates are too dominant on the SC and this does not allow the space for Cambodian ownership and leadership to emerge. Both Cambodians and expatriates agree that expatriate expertise and guidance are going to be needed for a long time to come and also recognise that research bodies in even the most developed countries enjoy the benefits of being multi-cultural. So the issue is not about whether or not expatriates should be involved, but about the best way for them to make their contribution.

It was particularly interesting that the Cambodian respondents had an entirely different perspective on this issue, in that it is their perception that Cambodians lack the motivation to step up and take leadership and responsibility. The reasons cited for this were varied, but often included the practical reality of remuneration. As it stands at present any leadership role in the DRF would be without financial compensation for what might prove to be a significant demand on the individual's time. Many Cambodians need to do more than one job, or supplement their salary with consultancies, in order to earn enough money. Consequently they do not have free time to give to voluntary positions. Another issue raised was the perception that aspects of leadership, such as networking, are the domain only of very high status individuals, with younger and less experienced people feeling that they should not put themselves forward.

Clearly this is not an issue that can or should be resolved quickly. For the present it is probably enough that it has been raised and brought into the open. If the SC remains alert and periodically reviews membership and who is taking which roles, that will contribute to the relevant shifts happening over time.

3.3 Engagement with policy

A recurring theme in discussions was that of policy impact and policy implementation without clear definition of what is meant by each these terms in any given circumstance. This seemed to be one of those issues where assumptions are being made that everyone ascribes the same meaning to each phrase. It was interesting that although the need to access and influence policy makers occurred frequently in the interviews, no one talked about policy formulation. Given that formulation, implementation and impact of policy are three distinctly different issues it would probably be helpful for the SC to think about agreeing some working definitions of what they mean by these phrases and then adopt them as standard usage according to purpose.

There were differences of opinion about where the DRF should position itself with regard to influencing policy makers. A question was posed: *'Where should the energy be focused – policy impact or research culture?'* Some think that influencing policy should be an active goal, while

others believe that a research culture and dependable, high quality research results should be the goal and that once they are established as the norm influence on policy will flow as a natural consequence. The SC has deliberated on these issues more than once in the past. In some respects the question raised goes to the heart of the as yet unresolved issue of the DRF identity. For this reason the SC needs to reach some resolution of this debate before it can define its vision of what it wants to be in the future.

4. Moving forward

4.1 Transition

This review is being conducted at the start of the third and final year of the DRF's first phase. The SC are busy preparing for the 2010 symposium, getting the Collaborative Grants scheme started, and considering their response to the Scoping Study. There is interest and enthusiasm for taking the DRF forward into a new phase and getting all the components fully operational. This enthusiasm is tempered by the understanding that the work on components can only be successful if appropriate changes are made to the governance and support mechanisms, and that this requires some urgent time and attention before the fundraising for phase 2 can begin.

Thus in this transition process the DRF needs to consolidate and build existing achievements and successes while continuing to innovate until all the components are operational and appropriately linked to achieve maximum impact. In addition it needs to address its own institutional development. Simultaneous consolidation, innovation and internal development would be a demanding combination in the best of circumstances, and it is especially challenging in structures such as this with no full time staff or designated leadership of the group. There is a strong feeling in the group, as noted above, that they need to create a secretariat and appoint a full time administrator/coordinator, accountable to the SC Chairperson, as soon as possible.

4.2 Agreed next steps

After the presentation of findings at the workshop on 17th May the SC members present identified governance and sustainability as the most pressing priorities for consideration. During the ensuing discussion they acknowledged that the future goal, form and governance of the DRF are inextricably interlinked and thus need to be deliberated in tandem.

With the aim of having a funding proposal ready by the time of the symposium in September, so that it can be discussed when IDRC personnel are in country, the SC decided on the following actions:

- To appoint a Chairperson so that there is recognised leadership of the SC through this critical period. This will happen at the next SC meeting (tentatively agreed for 21st June at SNEC)
- To hire a consultant to support/facilitate the decision making process and write the proposal
- To hold a workshop to decide on the long-term vision for the DRF, the new governance and support structure, and the outline of the programme for the next three years
- To get information about the current status of the budget and what flexibility exists with regard to the underspend
- It was also decided CEA would join the SC for the next three months in order to contribute to the decision making and proposal development processes

Jenny Pearson
15th June 2010

Appendix 1: Review Terms of Reference

CAMBODIA DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH FORUM Short Evaluation

Background

The Development Research Forum (DRF) of Cambodia was established following a successful All-Partner's Forum in September 2007. For the past two years, Cambodia's Leading Independent Development Policy Research Institute (CDRI) and Community Based Natural Resource Management Learning Institute (CBNRM LI) have successfully organized two annual symposiums that provided opportunities for researchers and institutions/organizations to share knowledge focused on relevant development issues. With over 200 participants present in both annual symposiums, there is a clear opportunity and demand for more similar activities in the future.

The DRF envisions building the capacity of research constituencies and individual researchers working on key development themes affecting equity in social, economic, environmental and natural resource management areas. It aims to provide a platform for collaborative thinking and leadership, which goes beyond development research and into policy implementation. In addition to the DRF Annual Symposiums, other components of this project include special interest research groups, collaborative grants, and research fellowships that aim to integrate Cambodian researchers and research institutions into existing national, regional and global research networks. Two other important outcomes are the scoping study on the research capacity of Cambodian universities (led by Professor Kwok) and the launch of an Accelerated ICT Platform.

Purpose of Evaluation

"IDRC recognizes that evaluation makes an essential contribution to learning and acquiring knowledge about effective approaches to research for development" –

(Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2005-2010 - paragraph 78).

The project grant is now approaching its third and final year. The success of its two annual symposiums is a testament to the importance of continuing the Development Research Forum in Cambodia. This short assessment will allow the DRF Steering Committee and its stakeholders to do a self-evaluation of how the project has done so far, and where it is headed, beyond the grant period. In addition, it will help identify optimal strategies for managing CDRF.

Scope and Focus

The consultant will conduct a “next steps”, key informant assessment with the DRF Steering Committee members, stakeholders, and senior members of DRF partners*. His tasks will include:

1. Assess whether CDRF should focus more on the annual symposiums, or go beyond it.
2. Document views on more effective approach to achieving the other components of the project.
3. Identify more efficient ways to handle the governance and operations of CDRF.
4. Evaluate the merit and effectiveness of CDRI and CBNRM LI as co-collaborators of CDRF, as well as of the co-staffing structure to support the DRF.

Expected outputs

A short report, of not more than 15 pages, that includes key-findings taken from interviews of CDRF stakeholders and key players (e.g., Steering Committee). The consultant is expected to finish all interviews and draft the final report by March 31, 2010, which will be shared with the CDRF Steering Committee. A total of 15 working days is anticipated (*2 days desk research, 8 days interviews, 3 days to draft report, and 1 day to finalize report*). The consultant is also expected to visit IDRC's ASRO office after he has submitted the report to present his findings.

*Tentative list of people to interview

DRF Steering Committee:

1. Dr. Hossein Jalilian – Director of Research, CDRI
2. Mr. Chan Sophal – former Research Advisor, CDRI
3. Mr. Em Sorany – Manager of Knowledge Centre, CDRI
4. Mr. Toby Carson – Program Advisor, CBNRM LI
5. Dr. Kate Frieson – Research Advisor, CBNRM LI
6. Mr. Chan Sopheap – Supreme National Economic Council
7. Mr. Un Luyna - Supreme National Economic Council
8. Dr. John McAndrew – Advisor, ADI/CCC
9. Ms. Hak Sochanny – ADI/CCC
10. Dr. Neth Barum – Royal University of Phnom Penh
11. Dr. Ngin Chanrith - Royal University of Phnom Penh
12. Mr. Samouen Sothyro – Communications Manager, CBNRM LI

CDRF Coordinators

13. Hing Vutha, CDRI coordinator
14. Meng Monyrak, CBNRM LI coordinator

Other stakeholders

15. Dr Hang Chuon Naron, Permanent Vice Chairman, Supreme National Economic Council, Secretary-General, Ministry of Economy and finance, and Chairman of the Board of CDRI and CBNRM Learning.
16. Larry Strange, Executive Director, CDRI
17. Srey Marona, Program Coordinator, CBNRM LI
18. Richard Fuchs, Regional Director, IDRC
19. Hein Mallee, Senior Program Specialist, Rural Poverty and Environment, IDRC
20. Herminia Francisco, EEPSEA Director, IDRC
21. Maria Ng, Senior Program Specialist, PAN Asia, IDRC

Guide Questions

The following questions can be used as a guide (*consultant to draft and refine*):

1. How has CDRF performed in relation to achieving its goals:
 - Providing and promoting collaborative thinking and leadership amongst the diverse development research actors who otherwise might seldom interact across sectoral lines.
 - Collaborative thinking on intersections between development research and policy implementation.
 - Communicate and disseminate research on development issues to government, international and national organizations and media.
2. To what extent has the DRF contributed to the field of development research in Cambodia?
3. Has CDRF been effective in increasing participation, networking and collaboration between development researchers and institutions in Cambodia? How?
 - a. What activities should CDRF focus on to achieve its objectives? Should it stick with the annual symposium or carry out activities beyond the symposium?
 - b. With the current progress of the other components of the DRF, is there a more effective way of accomplishing its other goals and objectives?
4. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (if any) encountered by CDRF?
5. Has both CDRI and CBNRM LI effectively collaborated and managed CDRF and its components?
 - a. What aspects, if any, of its 'governance' need modifications?
 - b. What aspects, if any, of its 'operations' need modification?
6. At present, would you think CDRF has achieved enough momentum for it to continue and stand-alone beyond the grant period? What suggestions can you make?

Appendix 2: List of Interviews

Name	Institution	Date
Hing Vutha	CDRI – DRF Administrator	6 th April
Dr. Hossein Jalilian	CDRI	7 th April
Em Sorany	CDRI	7 th April
Dr. Kate Frieson	CBNRM LI	9 th April
Srey Marona	CBNRM LI	9 th April
Heng Chinda	CBNRM LI – DRF Administrator	9 th April
Toby Carson	CBNRM LI	9 th April
Dr. Ngin Chanrith	RUPP	9 th April
Dr. Hein Mallee	IDRC	16 th April, by Skype
Richard Fuchs	IDRC	20 th April, by Skype
Larry Strange	CDRI	20 th April
Chan Sopheap	SNEC	20 th April
Dr. John McAndrew	CCC	26 th April
Chan Sophal	CEA	26 th April

The consultant also observed the meeting on 26th April when Dr Kwok Kian-Woon and his colleagues presented and took feedback about the Scoping Study.

Appendix 3: Guide Questions for Interviews

I. Objectives and components

How well has the DRF done in achieving each of its objectives? What are the most relevant factors affecting achievement?

Do you think these are still the right objectives?

Which of these components are proving to be the most effective in supporting achievement of the objectives?

Are any of these components not helpful? Is there anything else that would be more effective?

II. Future priorities

Given the success of the symposia and the ICT platform, do you think these should remain priorities or should attention now be given to making other components active? If yes, which and what is the best way to go about it?

III. Contribution

How would you describe the contribution that the DRF has made to development research in Cambodia thus far? What do you see as its potential contribution in future? On what is that future contribution dependent?

IV. Operating environment

What are the opportunities and threats in the external environment that have the potential to support or hinder the DRF in achievement of its goals?

V. Governance and operations

What is working well in the governance arrangements for DRF? What could be improved?

What is working well in the operational arrangements for DRF? What could be improved?

VI. Sustainability

Has DRF yet achieved enough momentum for it to continue and stand alone beyond the grant period? What suggestions can you make about enhancing its sustainability?

VII. Anything else?

Is there anything else important not covered by these questions?

Appendix 4: Feedback Workshop

Held at CDRI on Monday 17th May

Present:

Chan Sophal	CEA
Em Sorany	CDRI
Dr. Kate Frieson	CBNRM LI
Heng Chinda	CBNRM LI
Hing Vutha	CDRI
Srey Marona	CBNRM LI
Dr. John McAndrew	CCC ADI
Dr. Ngin Chanrith	RUPP
Jenny Pearson	Consultant

Process:

- PowerPoint presentation of findings
- Questions of clarification
- Identification of priority issues for discussion
- Discussion of priority issues and decisions for action
- Clarification of process and dates for responding to draft report
- Final comments and closing